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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001386

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SENSITIVE

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1E. O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ELAB ECON EIND ETRD PHUM SOCI ZI
SUBJECT: 2004 ZIMBABWE CHILD LABOR UPDATE

Ref: A) SECSTATE 163982
B) 03 HARARE 01669

11. (SBU) Summary: The continuing political, economic, and social crises in Zimbabwe overwhelm any attempt to eliminate child labor. With 1.1 to 2 million HIV/AIDS orphans, many children must work to survive. As in Ref B, increased enforcement of existing child labor laws awaits resources from GOZ, labor, employers, and NGOs. The pre-land reform 1999 child labor survey still serves as the statistical base. Thus, statistics on the current situation are scarce. But, civil society organizations are certain child labor is increasing. End Summary.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO PREVENT THE ENGAGEMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

12. (SBU) Private education costs continue to spiral out of reach of middle-class families, and some poorer families cannot pay even public school fees. Food security and healthcare continue to deteriorate, with children working to support families devastated by hunger, illness, and premature death. The HIV/AIDS pandemic leaves many child-headed households. Even with helpful relatives, the children must work to survive.

13. (SBU) GOZ Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare touts its BEAM (Basic Education Assistance Module) and CDC (Children in Difficult Circumstances) programs. These programs were designed to pay for school fees (BEAM) and other items such as uniforms and books (CDC) for children who could not afford to go to school. GOZ sought to reach 25% of affected children but never achieved more than 18% in 2000 with declining percentages each year since. The Central Statistics Office recently conducted a labor survey with results due out in December 2004.

14. (SBU) Civil society labors on. Save the Children Norway Zimbabwe sponsored a series of workshops in 2003 that culminated in the formation of a National Movement for Working Children and Youth. They started research into child domestic servants but lack of resources and survival needs have overtaken them. Associated Mine Workers of Zimbabwe plans to travel from mine to mine to educate employees and employers on child labor but currently lacks resources. Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union plans to provide basic reading and writing skills to child domestic workers. The project will start in Chinoyi, Bulawayo, Mutare, and Zvishane.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY AIMED AT ELIMINATION OF THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

15. (SBU) There has been no comprehensive policy to eliminate the worst forms of child labor despite agreement between GOZ, labor, and employers about the need for such a policy. Zimbabwe also has no resources to implement a comprehensive policy.

16. (SBU) According to GOZ Ministry of Labor, the ILO refused to fund a 2002 proposal for child labor mitigation programs and an in-depth study on the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry blamed Zimbabwe's continued international isolation.

CONTINUAL PROGRESS TOWARDS ELIMINATING THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

17. (SBU) GOZ has made no discernible progress in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Due to the continuing economic collapse, as well as the increasing impact of HIV/AIDS-related deaths, increasingly more children must work to ensure their families' survival.

18. (SBU) GOZ and civil society use the 1999 child labor survey as a statistical base due to a lack of reliable

current information. Civil society recognizes that the post-land reform situation is significantly worse, but the GOZ continues to tout the 1999 numbers.

19. (SBU) However, some things do remain true. Save the Children Norway Zimbabwe, Child Protection Society, UNICEF, ILO, Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ), Associated Mine Workers of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union, GOZ Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare all agree that child labor exists mostly in agriculture, domestic work, and informal mining.

10. (SBU) Child Protection Society asserts that new farmers use children as cheap labor that cannot complain about working conditions. UNICEF sees children working as independent contractors so employers can evade employing children. Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union observes that employers often bring children from their rural homes to work as domestics with parental consent.

11. (SBU) Save the Children Norway Zimbabwe cites two specific examples: Sugar businesses along the Mozambique border at Catiyo use children to sell sugar across the border. Often with the complicity of their parents, children are paid less than adults and do not attend school. The tea estates, however, send children to school in the morning and to work in the afternoon and evening.

12. (SBU) Information on specific types of the worst forms of child labor is mainly anecdotal. Trafficking in children occurs only in isolated instances. Prostitution is on the increase with more female pimps and male prostitutes. Children often lack access to necessary safety equipment and training. Child domestic workers can work as much as 14 hours a day.

13. (SBU) Non-Payment of wages occurs mostly in the domestic worker sphere where some employers believe they are doing a child from their rural home a favor. In addition, employers pay the parents for the child's work. Relatives often use AIDS-orphaned children as domestics without pay. There are also unconfirmed reports of police rounding up street kids and taking them to work on a farm without pay. However, these reports are dubious at best.

COMMENT

14. (SBU) GOZ has made very little measurable progress on eliminating the worst forms of child labor. The crush of poverty and HIV/AIDS has forced many Zimbabweans to focus on survival by any means, including child labor. Until these root causes are resolved, there is little hope for effective efforts against the worst forms of child labor.

Sullivan